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CHAPTER 65.

ATTENDANCE OF PUPILS

ARTICLE 1.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

SECTION 59-65-10. Responsibility of parent or guardian; notification by school district of availability of kindergarten; transportation for kindergarten pupils.

(A) All parents or guardians shall cause their children or wards to attend regularly a public or private school or kindergarten of this State which has been approved by the State Board of Education or a member school of the South Carolina Independent Schools' Association or some similar organization, or a parochial, denominational, or church-related school, or other programs which have been approved by the State Board of Education from the school year in which the child or **ward is five years of age before September first** until the child or ward attains his seventeenth birthday or graduates from high school. A parent or guardian whose child or ward is not six years of age on or before the first day of September of a particular school year may elect for their child or ward not to attend kindergarten. For this purpose, the parent or guardian shall sign a written document making the election with the governing body of the school district in which the parent or guardian resides. The form of this written document must be prescribed by regulation of the Department of Education. Upon the written election being executed, that child or ward may not be required to attend kindergarten.

(B) Each school district shall provide transportation to and from public school for all pupils enrolled in public kindergarten classes who request the transportation. Regulations of the State Board of Education governing the operation of school buses shall apply.

SECTION 59-65-20. Penalty for failure to enroll or cause child to attend school.

Any parent or guardian who neglects to enroll his child or ward or refuses to make such child or ward attend school shall, upon conviction, be fined not more than fifty dollars or be imprisoned not more than thirty days; each day's absence shall constitute a separate offense; provided, the court may in its discretion suspend the sentence of anyone convicted of the provisions of this article.

SECTION 59-65-30. Exceptions.

The provisions of this article do not apply to:

- (a) A child who has been graduated from high school or has received the equivalent of a high school education from a school approved by the State Board of Education, or member school of South Carolina Independent Schools' Association, or a private school in existence at the time of the passage of this article;
- (b) A child who obtains a certificate from a psychologist certified by the State Department of Education or from a licensed physician stating that he is unable to attend school because of a physical or mental disability, provided there are no suitable special classes available for such child in the school district where he resides;
- (c) A child who has completed the eighth grade and who is determined by the court to be legally and gainfully employed whose employment is further determined by such court to be necessary for the maintenance of his home;
- (d) [Reserved]

(e) A student who has a child and who is granted a temporary waiver from attendance by the district's attendance supervisor or his designee. The district attendance supervisor may grant a temporary waiver only if he determines that suitable day care is unavailable. The student must consult with the district supervisor or his designee in a timely manner to consider all available day care options or the district shall consider the student to be in violation of this chapter.

(f) A child who has reached the age of sixteen years and whose further attendance in school, vocational school, or available special classes is determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to be disruptive to the educational program of the school, unproductive of further learning, or not in the best interest of the child, and who is authorized by the court to enter into suitable gainful employment under the supervision of the court until age seventeen is attained. However, prior to being exempted from the provisions of this article, the court may first require that the child concerned be examined physically and tested mentally to assist the court to determine whether or not gainful employment would be more suitable for the child than continued attendance in school. The examination and testing must be conducted by the Department of Youth Services or by any local agency which the court determines to be appropriate. The court shall revoke the exemption provided in this item upon a finding that the child fails to continue in his employment until reaching the age of seventeen years.

SECTION 59-65-40. Home schooling programs. (OPTION 1)

(A) **Parents or guardians may teach their children at home** if the instruction is approved by the district board of trustees of the district in which the children reside. A district board of trustees shall approve home schooling programs which meet the following standards:

(1) the parent:

(a) **holds at least a high school diploma** or the equivalent general educational development (GED) certificate and, beginning in the 1989-90 school year, attains a passing score on the basic skills examination developed pursuant to Section 59-26-20(b)(1) after the State Department of Education has validated the test for use with home schooling parents; or

(b) **has earned a baccalaureate degree;**

(2) the instructional day is at least four and one-half hours, excluding lunch and recesses, and the instructional year is at least one hundred eighty days;

(3) **the curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the basic instructional areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies and in grades seven through twelve, composition and literature;**

(4) **as evidence that a student is receiving regular instruction, the parent shall present a system for maintaining and maintain the following records for inspection** upon reasonable notice by a representative of the school district:

(a) **a plan book, diary, or other written record indicating subjects taught and activities** in which the student and parent engage;

(b) **a portfolio of samples of the student's academic work;** and

(c) **a record of evaluations of the student's academic progress.** A semiannual progress report including attendance records and individualized assessments of the student's academic progress in each of the basic instructional areas specified in item (3) must be submitted to the school district.

(5) **students must have access to library facilities;**

(6) students must participate in the annual statewide testing program and the Basic Skills Assessment Program approved by the State Board of Education for their appropriate grade level. **The tests must be administered by a certified school district employee either with public school students or by special**

arrangement at the student's place of instruction, at the parent's option. The parent is responsible for paying the test administrator if the test is administered at the student's home; and

(7) parents must agree in writing to hold the district, the district board of trustees and the district's employees harmless for any educational deficiencies of the student sustained as a result of home instruction.

At any time the school district determines that the parent is not maintaining the home school program in keeping with the standards specified in this section the district board of trustees shall notify the parent to correct the deficiencies within thirty days. If the deficiencies are not corrected within thirty days, the district board of trustees may withdraw its approval.

(B) The district board of trustees shall provide for an application process which elicits the information necessary for processing the home schooling request, including a description of the program, the texts and materials to be used, the methods of program evaluation, and the place of instruction. Parents must be notified in advance of the date, place, and time of the meeting at which the application is considered by the board and parents may be heard at the meeting.

(C) Within the first fifteen instructional days of the public school year, students participating in home instruction and eligible for enrollment in the first grade of the public schools must be tested to determine their readiness for the first grade using the readiness instrument approved by the State Board of Education for public school students. If a student is determined to be "not ready" or is determined to lack the necessary emotional maturity, the parent must be advised by appropriate school district personnel whether a kindergarten or a first grade curriculum should be used for the child. Nothing in this section may be interpreted to conflict with a parent's right to exempt his child from kindergarten as provided in Section 59-65-10(A).

(D) Should a student in a home schooling program score below the test requirements of the promotion standard prescribed for public school students by the State Board of Education for one year, the district board of trustees shall decide whether or not the student shall receive appropriate instructional placement in the public school, special services as a handicapped student, or home schooling with an instructional support system at parental expense. The right of a parent to enroll his child in a private or parochial school as provided in Section 59-65-10(A) is unaffected by this provision.

(E) If a parent is denied permission to begin or continue home schooling by a district board of trustees, the decision of the district board of trustees may be appealed, within ten days, to the State Board of Education. Any appeal from the decision of the State Board of Education must be taken, within thirty days, to the family court.

SECTION 59-65-45. Alternative home schooling requirements. (OPTION 2)

In lieu of the requirements of Section 59-65-40, parents or guardians may teach their children at home if the instruction is conducted under the auspices of the South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools. Bona fide membership and continuing compliance with the academic standards of South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools exempts the home school from the further requirements of Section 59-65-40.

The State Department of Education shall conduct annually a review of the association standards to insure that requirements of the association, at a minimum, include:

(a) a parent must hold at least a high school diploma or the equivalent general educational development (GED) certificate;

(b) the instructional year is at least one hundred eighty days; and

(c) the curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the basic instructional areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, and in grades seven through twelve, composition and literature. By January thirtieth of each year, the South Carolina Association of Independent Home

Schools shall report the number and grade level of children home schooled through the association to the children's respective school districts.

SECTION 59-65-46. Home schooling of foster child.

A foster parent may teach a foster child at home as provided in Sections 59-65-40, 59-65-45, or any other provision of law, if, in addition to any other requirements, home schooling of the child has been approved by the Department of Social Services or other agency having custody of the child.

SECTION 59-65-47. Associations for home schools; requirements. (OPTION 3)

In lieu of the requirements of Section 59-65-40 or Section 59-65-45, parents or guardians may teach their children at home if the instruction is conducted under the auspices of an association for home schools which has no fewer than fifty members and meets the requirements of this section. Bona fide membership and continuing compliance with the academic standards of the associations exempts the home school from the further requirements of Section 59-65-40 or Section 59-65-45.

The State Department of Education shall conduct annually a review of the association standards to ensure that requirements of the association, at a minimum, include:

(a) a parent must hold at least a high school diploma or the equivalent general educational development (GED) certificate;

(b) the instructional year is at least one hundred eighty days;

(c) the curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the basic instructional areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies, and in grades seven through twelve, composition and literature; and

(d) educational records shall be maintained by the parent-teacher and include:

(1) a plan book, diary, or other record indicating subjects taught and activities in which the student and parent-teacher engage;

(2) a portfolio of samples of the student's academic work; and

(3) a semiannual progress report including attendance records and individualized documentation of the student's academic progress in each of the basic instructional areas specified in item (c) above.

By January thirtieth of each year, all associations shall report the number and grade level of children home schooled through the association to the children's respective school districts.